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FOR UNITY

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WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

A Letter to the Independent Labor Party of Great Britain from the Communist Party USA (Opposition)

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since the Independent Labor Party seceded, in revolt against the "standing orders" of the Labor Party, has it been buffeted by the storms of political controversy. And that was to have been expected. Actually the break came not over the "standing orders", in themselves, but rather because there had already matured such political differences between the L.P. and the I.L.P. (bourgeois democracy, nature of the struggle for power etc.) which could no longer be submerged in the interests of formal unity.

The break, however, did not come exclusively over these issues which would have tended to draw the line sharply between those harboring the illusions of the efficiency of reform socialism and others standing firmly on a position of revolutionary socialism. Because of this and also because of traditional association with the I.L.P. reformist elements went along into the I.L.P. when it broke with the Labor Party. This became quite evident especially when the I.L.P. began to reformulate a program of principles and tactics.

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Were the situation in the world communist movement in a normal state, were it not divided into a number of warring tendencies, were there a healthy approach in the Comintern to leftward moving workers, the process of clarification and movement to the left—toward communism—would proceed much more rapidly and much more evenly than has been the case. As the situation stands not only the difference between reformist and revolutionary socialism but also every tendency in the communist movement finds some expression within the Independent Labor Party. This situation has been further confused by proposals for the organization of either an in-between International or a Fourth International.

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In the negotiations of the I.L.P. with the Communist International, as expressed in the letter of the National Administrative Council to the Executive Committee of the Communist International, we also find these various conflicting tendencies expressed.

It is with the earnest desire to help bring about a greater measure of clarity and understanding on what we consider as fundamental problems, that this letter to the National Administrative Council of the Independent Labor Party, was sent.

The problems considered are of paramount and lasting importance not only to I.L.P. members of Great Britain but also to revolutionary workers in all capitalist countries.

New York, March, 1934.

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A Letter to the Independent Labor Party of Great Britain from the Communist Party U. S. A. (Opposition)

To The National Administrative Council Of The
Independent Labor Party,
A. Fenner Brockway, Secretary.

Dear Comrades:—

For some time we have been observing with keen interest and great hope the events in your party, the I.L.P. We have noted with gratification the development of your struggles against reformism, especially since the Derby conference. Our opinion has been and remains that a complete break with social-reformism by the decisive majority of the Independent Labor Party would go a long way toward laying a sound and broad foundation for a vigorous communist movement in Great Britain. A realistic revolutionary movement rooted in the soil of the objective conditions and class relations in Great Britain. This conviction of ours is all the more fortified by the tragic weakness of the C.P.G.B. As you know we attribute this weakness, which is even more tragic politically than numerically, to the ultra-left, sectarian tactical line which the Communist International and its British section have been pursuing for some years, particularly since 1928.

It is in this spirit and approach that we have considered your last communication (January 8) to the Secretariat of the Comintern. We especially greet the fact that in your approach to the Comintern you emphasize the fact that your "decision will not be taken with reference solely to the interests of the Independent Labor Party. Association must be considered from the viewpoint of the world revolutionary movement in general and the revolutionary movement within the sphere of British imperialism in particular." Therefore, we are certain that you will realize that our statement to your National Administrative Council and your forthcoming Easter conference is not a case of our interfering in your affairs, is not an attempt to dictate to you, is not an attempt to advise

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you from on high. The suggestions and proposals we are making to you are animated solely by our desire to hasten the reconstruction and unification of the world revolutionary movement which we believe cannot be achieved without the Comintern dropping its present sectarian course and returning to the Leninist tactical path.

The encouragement you are giving to a discussion of the fundamental problems confronting the world proletariat is welcome, especially because, for some years, objective discussion has been impossible in the official ranks of the Comintern.

* * *

A Critical Examination

We desire to consider critically a number of questions raised by you in your communication to the Comintern. The position we take and the conclusions we have arrived at in reference to these questions are based not on factional animus but on ten years of experience inside the Communist International, and nearly five years of struggle outside the Communist International, fighting for a healthier International, struggling for a Comintern which will be able to fulfill its historic mission as the world party of the revolutionary proletariat. We agree with you in your conclusion "that the rigid and detailed control of the policy of national sections by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union thru the ECCI is bad." You are aware of the fact that the International Communist Opposition to which we, the Communist Party of the United States. (Opposition) are affiliated has, from the very moment of its inception, advocated what you now demand: "the replacement of the actual monopoly of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the leadership of the Comintern by a real collective international leadership based upon party representatives who are in a position to pass their own judgment upon the class relations in their countries."

But in your communication to the ECCI there are a number of conclusions which we consider either misleading in implication or false in substance. For example, you state: "In 1920 the Communist International's economic and political analysis led it to develop its organizational form on the assumption of the imminence of the world proletarian revolution and the actuality of civil war in the chief capitalist countries." This statement gives the impression that you are of the opinion that the organizational structure of the Comintern was set up only to meet an imminent revolutionary struggle. This is not so. No doubt, at the time of the organization of the Comintern,

an actual revolutionary situation prevailed in a number of countries; to wit Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, etc. Furthermore, at that time the trend of the world revolutionary movement was upward. However when the revolutionary wave receded, the Comintern then under the leadership of Lenin, quickly recognized it and adjusted its tactics of struggle accordingly. The theses and resolutions of the Third World Congress bears this out. Yet, the organizational structure and the 21 points of the Comintern were not dropped. The Comintern continued to make headway, precisely on the basis of its organizational structure and the 21 points. The 21 points proved of great service to the Comintern in preventing an influx of centrist, or hidden reformist elements, like MacDonald at that time.

* * *

The Crisis In The Comintern

The crisis in the Comintern is not in any way due to the organizational structure and the 21 points or any of the basic tactical positions taken by the Communist International in its first four World Congresses. In fact, the very opposite is the case. Really, it is the dropping in recent years of democratic centralism, as provided for in Point 12, that is in no small measure responsible for the chaos in the Comintern. The Comintern structure provides that "all parties belonging to the Communist International should be formed on the basis of the principle of democratic centralization," and that every party center "enjoy the confidence of the members of the Party who are to endow this center with complete power, authority, and ample rights". Certainly, this is adequate provision for Party democracy. Unfortunately, Point 12 has been dead in the Comintern relationships for some time.

The International Communist Opposition has repeatedly emphasized that "the organizational foundation of the Communist International as well as of its sections, must be democratic centralism. Revolutionary discipline based upon democratic centralism, is the indispensible binding force of the Communist Parties." We have never forgotten the lesson emphasized so often by Lenin that "if discipline stands in the service of a false policy, then it becomes mere grotesque foolishness". In recent years the ECCI, under the sole leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, has made a mockery out of democratic centralism, and has foisted on the various sections of the Communist international a false and ultra-left sectarian policy.

* * *

Relationships With The C. I.

May we suggest that **a more adequate approach to the question of your organizational relationships with the Communist International** than the one you have proposed on January 8th, **is outlined in the platform of the International Communist Opposition.** We propose that your N.A.C. and your National Conference should seriously consider the following:

> "The Communist Opposition fights the present inner Party regime in the Communist International and its sections. It fights against the replacement of democratic centralism by burocratic centralism.
>
> The Communist Opposition demands of the Communist International:
>
> 1. The extension of the right (existing in the statutes but not in fact) of criticism—which today exists only for the leadership of the Communist International.
> 2. The preparation of important decisions of the Communist International thru international discussions.
> 3. The abandonment of the mechanical transference of the points of view and inner-party differences in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to other sections and of the consideration of the questions of the individual sections primarily from the point of view of the differences in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
>
> The questions of the individual sections must be examined, estimated and decided from the viewpoint of the special conditions of the class struggle in the individual countries.
>
> 4. The replacement of the actual monopoly of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the leadership of the Comintern by a real collective, and at the same time, united and centralized international leadership based upon the Party representatives who are in a position to pass their own judgment upon the class relations in their own country and who are not merely officials of the international leadership but actually trusted representatives of their sections.
> 5. The legal sections of the Comintern must raise their own means for regular party work. International financial support shall be given: a) to illegal parties; b) to legal parties for special campaigns and for the production and distribution of international propaganda literature.
> 6. The international leadership shall have as its tasks: a) the leading of international actions; b) the working-out of general tactical lines; c) the supervision and control of the carrying through of the fundamental principles as well as of the general tactical line by the individual sections. The international leadership cannot replace the leadership of the sections. The international leadership should lead but not hold in apron strings.
> 7. The withdrawal of all expulsions against the opponents of the ultra-left course."

* * *

The Source Of The Crisis

What is the source of the crisis in the Communist International? At the conference of the International Communist Opposition held in July 1932, we declared:

> "The real basic source of the ultra-left course is the false transference of the methods and forms of struggle, corresponding to a country in which the working class has already triumphed and in which Socialism is being built, to the Communist Parties of those countries in which the majority of the working class has still to be won and the prerequisites for taking up the struggle for power have still to be created."

Inseparable from this condition is the monopoly of the leadership of the Russian Communist Party. This factor has proved especially aggravating since the Russian leadership has become narrower and its international experiences have, with the passing of the years, been constantly receding further and further into the background. Besides, in view of the fundamentally different international situation today from that which prevailed before the war, it is all the more necessary to have a genuine international collective leadership in order to enable the Comintern to arrive at a correct tactical and strategical course.

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The C. I. Impedes I. L. P. Approach

It is most unfortunate that the leadership of the Communist International has put obstacles in the path of the membership of the Independent Labor Party travelling toward Communism. However, the failure of the ECCI to lend a helping hand to you comrades, should not discourage you and should not swerve you from your course of helping to build a sound foundation for a mass Communist party which will be able to overthrow the British ruling class, set up a proletarian dictatorship and begin the construction of Socialism in Great Britain. The abuse and filth showered on you by the ECCI, the sundry stupidities and crudities of the leadership of the Communist Party of Great Britain in its dealings with you, should not provoke you to embark upon roads that can only lead you to a break with the fundamental principles of Communism, or to an association with Trotskyism which is becoming evermore anti-Soviet in character and evermore the quintessence of international centrism, of hidden reformism today. Believe us, comrades, we have had even more provocations than you have. We have been subjected to the vilest slander. We have even had to face the physical violence of our comrades with whom we have no difference in principle but with whom we differ seriously on major tactical questions.

Yet, we have persistently clung to our objectives and energetically fought for the achievement of our aim: "the international consolidation of the Communist parties and movement in the individual countries into a united Communist World Party, into the Communist International, on the basis of the tactical teachings of Lenin."

* * *

Trotskyist Influence In I.L.P. Position On U.S.S.R.

That is why we do hope you will break completely with the erroneous point of view you express in your document, a point of view which indicates the influence of Trotskyism on your approach to the question of world revolutionary unity. Concretely, we think that you are wrong when you conceive as the source of the crisis in the Communist International, the following: "The deliberate policy of temporarily sacrificing the revolutionary movement in one country in order to strengthen the world revolutionary movement by safeguarding the U.S.S.R. by a network of trading agreements, non-aggression pacts, and treaties of friendship."

This conception is rooted in Trotsky's slanderous attack against the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in his entire theory of "National Bolshevism", in his whole anti-Leninist attitude towards the problem of Socialist construction in one country, specifically in the U.S.S.R.

You further state: "This question is of acute urgency owing to the present foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. government. . . The U.S.S.R. in its efforts to guard against military attack from imperialist and fascist powers has relied decreasingly on the workers in capitalist countries and increasingly on treaties with governments which are capitalist, imperialist and even Fascist."

We cannot emphasize too strongly our conviction that you are wrong in your conclusion: "that the Communist International is being driven to the position of holding back militants in some countries . . . and of promising to repudiate the essential activities of its own section in others."

* * *

Approach To U.S.S,R. A Basic Problem

Allow us to go somewhat at length into this basic problem of the relationship between the victorious proletariat in Russia and the proletariat in Western Europe and America where we have yet to win power. We hold that the interests of the victorious proletariat in Russia, led by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, do not conflict with the interests of the proletariat in the capitalist countries and with the interests of the oppressed colonial masses. We do stress that though there is a **uniformity of interests** there cannot be a **uniformity of tactics** in the two sectors of the world revolutionary movement. It is obvious that a Communist party which has already led the working class to power and victory must necessarily use different tactics from those pursued by

the Communist parties which have yet to achieve this task. It is equally obvious that Communist parties which are still fighting to win a majority of the working class in their respective countries cannot use the same tactics as those pursued by a Communist party which has already led the masses to the establishment of the Proletarian Dictatorship. More than that. **While the principles of Communism are international,** the tactics for the achievement of these principles are conditioned in every country by the specific peculiarities and objective situations prevailing there.

What is the actual relationship between the construction of Socialism in the U.S.S.R. and the efforts to enhance the proletarian revolution outside of the Soviet Union? First of all, we underscore the fact that the problems of Socialist construction in the U.S.S.R., are not merely the concern of the Russian proletariat but of the entire world proletariat. Just as we can make mistakes outside the Soviet Union, so can the Russian comrades make mistakes inside of the Soviet Union. Therefore, it is the duty of all revolutionists to manifest the most virile interest in Russian problems which are in essence of great international significance. We should not have the attitude that Russian problems are only the concern of the Russians, and that we outside of the U.S.S.R., can have nothing to say about them. We hold that Russian problems should also be subject to consideration and action by the collective leadership of the international Communist movement. It so happens that we are in agreement with the general line of the Communist party of the Soviet Union in socialist construction but we have arrived at this agreement not thru formal approval or fear of touching the question because it is of the "sacred province" of Russian communists. Rather, our conclusions are based upon a critical examination of Russian conditions and tasks today.

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U.S.S.R. Inspires Proletarian Struggle

The U.S.S.R. the land of the proletarian dictatorship, is the base, the center of inspiration of the international social revolution. The successes in Socialist construction in the Soviet Union are a tremendous help to the world revolution. This help is not at the expense of the world revolution. Were it not for the great victories scored by the Soviet proletariat in socialist construction, the sectarian and adventurous policies of the Comintern in the capitalist and colonial countries would, by this time, have reduced the Communist International to a mere memory.

Again, the Soviet Union has been a life saver for the international proletariat.

Obviously, it is folly to separate the interests of the Soviet Union, the interests of the First or the Second Five-Year Plan, from the interests of the world revolution. These interests are inseparable. They supplement and complete each other. There is no such thing as "Soviet nationalism". This is a pure fabrication of the worst enemies of the international communist movement, the Soviet Union and the entire world proletariat. Lenin foresaw the difficulties of the international social revolution and the hardships arising for the U.S.S.R. as a result of such difficulties and delay. Lenin placed this question very well when he underlined that:

> "Ten to twenty years of proper relations with the peasantry and victory is guaranteed on a world scale (even if proletarian revolutions, which are growing, are delayed); otherwise, we shall have twenty to forty years of the torture of White Guard terror."

It is clear, Lenin was right. A victory in the U.S.S.R. is necessarily and automatically a victory for the working class on a world scale. The success of socialist construction in the U.S.S.R. is of unlimited international import and is bound to serve as the mightiest stimulus for the development of a victorious proletarian movement throughout the capitalist countries. Of course, the more the proletarian mass movement is developed in a particular capitalist country, the more powerful a role does the Soviet Union's existence and achievements play in the speeding up of the process of communist victory in that country.

* * *

Fusion Of Interests Inside And Outside Of U.S.S.R.

The basic interests of the Soviet proletariat and of the working class in capitalist countries are fused and indivisible. If the proletariat in the capitalist countries did not support the Soviet Union, intervention would come rapidly enough and the Soviet Union would be in danger of being overthrown. If a failure or disaster were to befall the Soviet Union, it would spell the blackest defeat and darkest reaction for the workers and oppressed colonial masses throughout the world for many years. Should the international proletarian sympathy and support for the U.S.S.R. grow, then, the growth of Socialist construction in the Soviet Union the Socialist victory, would be speeded up tremendously. If the Soviet Union moves forward rapidly in its drive for Socialist construction, the socialist victories achieved go a long way towards

strengthening the proletarian positions of battle against international capitalism.

No one will deny that Stalin's factional methods, both in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and in the Comintern especially, that the factional regime, its clique-boasting and burocratic perversion of correct tactical policies with the consequent weakening of the Communist International, have given to bourgeois critics and to the Trotskyites plenty of talking points for such inventions and crudities such as the idea that the Soviet Union is no longer interested in the world revolution and is concerned only with the problems of Soviet economic construction. Whatever be the criticism we may level against Stalin, yet we never can stoop to deny that it was none other than Stalin himself who clearly said in reply to Trotsky at the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI in December, 1926 that:

> "The interests and tasks of the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. are interwoven and integrally connected with the interests and the tasks of the revolutionary movement in all countries and vice versa, the tasks of the revolutionary proletariat of all countries are inseparably connected with the tasks and achievements of the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. on the front of socialist construction."

For the C.P.S.U. Lenin's remarks to the Thirteenth Party Congress hold good. Lenin then said:

> "We live not only in a state but in a system of states and the existence of the Soviet republic side by side with imperialist states for any length of time is inconceivable. Finally, one or the other must conquer."

* * *

C. I. Ultra-Left Tactics Bring Paralysis

The fact that Stalin's ultra-left sectarian tactics in the Communist International have brought paralysis to the Comintern, particularly in the present moment of splendid opportunities for the development of the revolutionary movement against capitalism, does not mean that his intentions are bad or that his plans are to sacrifice the world revolution. It does mean that his present policies in the Comintern are wrong, are bad.

If your evaluation of the motives animating the C.P.S.U.'s attitude toward the world revolution were correct, then, the Comintern should be considered a counter-revolutionary organization, a betrayer of the principles of Marx and Lenin. If this were true, then, the I.L.P. should under no circumstances seek to affiliate sympathetically or fully with the Communist International. That is why we, of the International Communist Opposition, have placed so much stress on the following: the communists of all countries must guard against ultra-left sectarian

adventurism with special vigilance in these days of dying capitalism as a world system. Leftist sectarianism is the most deadly enemy of the international communist movement in its present decisive combat with social reformism and fascism—the two guardians at the death-bed of the dying, but still far from dead, order of capitalist exploitation. At this point we will remind Comrade Stalin of his own very effective answer to the Trotskyites when they first proposed tactics for the Comintern very much akin to, if not identical with, the present tactics of the C. I. The comrades of the I.L.P. will be interested in knowing that at the Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the E.C.C.I. Stalin said:

> " . . . . and that therefore it is possible to leap over these facts and by clamorous slogans demonstrate the revision of the tactics of the united front, disruption of the trade union movement in the West, etc. But what does it mean to ignore facts, to ignore the objective progress of affairs? It means to abandon science and to resort to witchcraft. This gives rise to adventurism in the policy of the Opposition (Trotzkyite) Bloc."

* * *

Our Indictment Of Comintern's Tactical Course

It is precisely along these lines that we indict the present tactics of the C.I. We have not forgotten that when Lenin worked in the Communist International he repeatedly warned those of us who were working there with him that "we should on no account lose sight of the originality in development, that we should not look at things in a stereotyped manner, that we should be able to distinguish and to perceive simultaneously both what is most general and also the minor peculiarities which sometimes play a decisive role in the subsequent transition on the road to communism."

For us of the International Communist Opposition the following advice of Lenin to the Third World Congress of the Comintern, held at a time similar to our present days, is still very much in force:

> "The fundamental tasks of the Communist Party in the current crisis is to conduct, extend, widen and unite the present defensive fight of the proletariat and sharpen it towards the final political struggle in accordance with the course of evolution. Should, however, the pace of development slacken and the present economic crisis be followed by a period of prosperity in a greater or less number of countries, this would by no means be an indication of the beginning of the organic epoch. So long as capitalism exists, periodic vacillations are inevitable. These vacillations are going to accompany capitalism in its death agony as was the case during its youth and maturity."

* * *

Soviet Foreign Policy And World Revolution

We further deny that there is any conflict between the

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interests of Soviet foreign policy and the interests of the world revolution. We maintain that the present foreign policy of the Soviet Union is correct, is in the interests of world peace which the proletariat so sorely needs, and is a continuation of the basic fundamentals of Soviet foreign policy as laid down by Lenin in the instructions to the delegation of the Soviet Union to the Genoa Conference in 1922. Carrying out this line of Lenin, Chicherin then declared in behalf of the Soviet Union:

> "The Russian delegation recognizes that, in the present historical period, which permits a parallel coexistence of the old social order and the new one being born, economic collaboration between the powers representing the two systems of property is urgently necessary for general economic reconstruction. . . . The Russian delegation has come here not to make propaganda for its theoretical views but to set up practical relations with the governments."

Let us also draw your attention to an interview between the British journalist, W. T. Goode, with Lenin in 1919 in reference to Soviet foreign policy. When Mr. Goode asked Lenin what guarantees could be offered against official propaganda among the Western peoples, if by any chance relations with the Soviet Republics were opened, Lenin replied that the Bolsheviks had declared to Bullitt (now American ambassador to the U.S.S.R.) that they were ready to sign an agreement not to make official propaganda. It was Lenin himself who emphasized to Bullitt that as a government the Soviets were ready to "undertake that no official propaganda should take place. If private persons undertook propaganda they could do it at their own risk and be amenable to the laws of the country in which they acted."

We cannot emphasize to you too strongly that you are laying yourself wide open to justifiable attacks by the Comintern burocratic leadership when you make so unjustifiable a criticism of the Soviet Union as when you speak of its promising "to repudiate the essential activities of its own sections" in other countries. Apparently you have in mind articles 3 and 4 of the Litvinoff-Roosevelt agreement leading to American recognition of the U.S.S.R. There is no cause for excitement over these paragraphs. Litvinoff was right when he declared that these articles are "the fixed policy of the government of the U.S.S.R." When Lenin was at the head of the C.P.S.U. and the C.I., the Soviet government signed a treaty of peace with Esthonia at Tartu on February 2, 1920 in which is found the following paragraph, article 7, section 5:

> " . . . to forbid the formation, and the presence in their territory, of any organizations or groups whatsoever claiming to govern all or part of the territory of the other contracting party, and the presence of representatives or officials of organizations or groups

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whose object is to overthrow the government of the other party to the Treaty."

And Article 4, section 2, of the peace treaty between Latvia and the Soviet Union signed on August 11, 1920 is identical with the one quoted above. In Article 5 of the final peace of Riga, March 18, 1921, between Poland and the R.S.F.S.R. and the Ukraine not only did the governments pledge themselves to refrain from interference in each other's internal affairs but the following is also agreed to:

"Each of the contracting Parties undertakes not to create or protect organizations which are formed with the object of encouraging armed conflict against the other Contracting Party or of undermining its territorial integrity, or of subverting by force its political or social institutions, nor yet such organizations as claim to be the Government of the other Party or of a part of the territories of the other party. The Contracting Parties, therefore, undertake to prevent such organizations, their official representatives and other persons connected therewith, from establishing themselves on their territory, and to prohibit military recruiting, etc. . . ."

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Greetings to I. L. P. National Conference

Comrades, we have perhaps imposed entirely too much on you in our lengthy statement. However, we feel so keenly th importance of the problems which you have raised and which we are facing in common, that we found it necessary to present our viewpoint in a rather detailed manner. We hope that the I.L.P. at its forthcoming National Conference, will take steps towards adopting a position which will insure its becoming a powerful factor not only in the achievement of the unification of the Communist forces of Great Britain, but of the world Communist movement as well. The Communist party of the United States (Opposition) is prepared to cooperate with you in a truly comradely fashion towards the achievement of this end which we consider as the most vital need of the world proletariat.

We extend to you fraternal greetings and express our sincerest hopes that your forthcoming National Conference will be successful and will prove of real service in the struggle for the reconstruction and reunification of the World Communist Movement, for the restoration of the Communist International to the tactical path of Leninism and organizational principles laid down in the basic Theses and Statutes of the C.I.

For the achievement of these objectives, we of the I.C.O., invite your comradely cooperation.

Forward to World Communist Unity!

Forward to the victory of the International Proletariat!

NATIONAL COMMITTEE
COMMUNIST PARTY U.S.A. (OPPOSITION)
Jay Lovestone, Sec'y.

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